REMARKS

This Amendment and Reply is intended to be completely responsive to the Final Office Action mailed August 10, 2009. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the present Application in view of the foregoing amendments and in view of the reasons that follow. Claims 13-25, which were previously withdrawn from consideration, have now been canceled without prejudice to further prosecution on the merits. Claim 26 has been amended. No new matter has been added. Accordingly, Claims 26-34 will be pending in the present Application upon entry of this Amendment and Reply.

A detailed listing of all claims that are, or were, in the application, irrespective of whether the claim(s) remain under examination in the application, is presented, with an appropriate defined status identifier.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. §§ 102 and 103

On page 3 of the Detailed Action, the Examiner rejected Claims 26-30 and 32-34 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Publication No. 20070029829 to Johnson et al. ("Johnson et al."). On pages 5-6 of the Detailed Action, the Examiner rejected Claims 26 and 28-34 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Pokorzynski et al. On pages 4-5 of the Detailed Action, the Examiner rejected Claim 31 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as be unpatentable over Johnson et al. in view of Pokorzynski et al. These rejections should be withdrawn because Johnson et al. and Pokorzynski et al., alone or in any proper combination, fail to disclose, teach or suggest the claimed invention.

For example, independent Claim 26 (as amended) now recites a "component for a vehicle interior" comprising, among other elements, a "a flexible skin having a flange that extends substantially entirely about the periphery of the skin . . . wherein the area over which the skin is provided comprises a first soft region and a second soft region, the first soft region and the second soft region each defining an exposed surface of the component that is configured to be interfaced by a vehicle occupant."

Claim 26 was amended for clarity in view of the Examiner's reading of the claimed "second soft region." Specifically, Applicants have attempted to clarify that the first soft region and the second soft region are both provided within the periphery of the same skin and both define an exposed surface of the component that is configured to be interfaced by a vehicle occupant. Neither Johnson et al. nor Pokorzynski et al., alone or in any proper combination, disclose, teach or suggest such a component.

Johnson et al. and Pokorzynski et al. are similar in that they both disclose a component having a cushioned region that can be formed by injecting a foam material between the skin and the substrate. In each case, the foam material extends to the peripheral edges of the skin so that the entire area under the skin is filled with the foam material. To contain the foam material, Johnson et al. and Pokorzynski et al. disclose different ways in which the peripheral edge of the skin engages the substrate to form a seal for the foam material. It is this engagement between the skin and the substrate that the Examiner alleged reads on the second soft region (as previously recited in independent Claim 26). Applicants note that in both Johnson et al. and Pokorzynski et al., the direct engagement between the skin and the substrate in the area of the seal is hidden from view and is not intended to be interfaced by a vehicle occupant. As such, neither Johnson et al. nor Pokorzynski et al. disclose, teach or suggest a component wherein an area over which a skin is provided comprises a first soft region and a second soft region, the first soft region and the second soft region each defining an exposed surface of the component that is configured to be interfaced by a vehicle occupant, as now required by independent Claim 26.

Further, while Johnson et al. discloses in paragraph [0020] that the component may have localized regions of cushioning, including regions where the skin may be in direct contact with the substrate, as noted by the Examiner, such localized regions of cushioning are always disclosed as being separate and distinct parts (see, e.g., Figure 11 and paragraph [0052]). While some parts may have the skin in the direct contact with the substrate to provide one degree of softness and other parts may have a filler material between the skin and the substrate to provide different degree of softness, Johnson et al. does not disclose, teach or suggest a component wherein an area over which the skin is provided comprises both a first soft region and a second

soft region that is within the periphery of the same skin. In fact, because of the technique disclosed in Johnson et al., Johnson et al. cannot provide a component wherein an area over which the skin is provided comprises both a first soft region and a second soft region that is within the periphery of the same skin.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection of independent Claim 26 because at least one element of such claim is not disclosed, taught or suggested by Johnson et al. or Pokorzynski et al., alone or in any proper combination. Claims 27-34, as they depend from independent Claim 26, are allowable therewith for at least the reasons set forth above, without regard to the further patentable subject matter set forth in such claims. Reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection of Claims 26-34 is respectfully requested. Finally, Applicants reserve the right to establish in future proceedings, if necessary, that Johnson et al. is not available as a prior art reference against the present Application.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 103

On pages 5 and 6, the Examiner rejected Claim 34 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as be unpatentable over Pokorzynski et al. in view of U.S. Publication No. 20020017360 to Hiraiwa et al. ("Hiraiwa et al."). This rejection should be withdrawn because the cited references, whether taken alone or in any proper combination, fail to disclose, teach or suggest the claimed invention.

In rejecting Claim 34, the Examiner stated that "Pokorzynski does not specifically disclose the boundary that is filled with a synthetic material to provide the appearance of a seamless transition between the skin and the substrate." In an attempt to correct this deficiency, the Examiner cited to Hiraiwa et al. for allegedly teaching this subject matter.

Claim 34 depends from independent Claim 26. As detailed above, Applicants have amended independent Claim 26 to recite a combination of subject matter that Applicants believe to be allowable over Johnson et al. and Pokorzynski et al. Hiraiwa et al. does not correct the deficiencies of Johnson et al. or Pokorzynski et al. that were detailed above. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection of Claim 34 at least because of its

dependency from independent Claim 26, without regard to the further patentable subject matter set forth in such claims.

Claim Rejections – Double Patenting

On page 8 of the Detailed Action, the Examiner provisionally rejected Claims 26-30 and 32-34 on the grounds of non-statutory obvious-type double patenting as being "unpatentable over claims 1-29 and 34-40 of copending Application No. 10/575,436." On pages 8-9 of the Detailed Action, the Examiner provisionally rejected Claim 31 on the grounds of non-statutory obvious-type double patenting as being "unpatentable over claims 34-40 of copending Application No. 10/575,436 in view of Pokorzynski et al."

Applicants believe that these doubling patenting rejections are moot in view of the amendments made to independent Claim 26. With the amendment to independent Claim 26, Claims 26-30 are patentably distinct from the claims pending in the '436 application. Even if the Examiner disagrees, Applicants respectfully request that the provisional double patenting rejection be withdrawn in the present Application and that the present Application be permitted to issue as a patent without a terminal disclaimer pursuant to M.P.E.P. § 804(I)(B)(1). While Applicants do not acquiesce with the provisional double patenting rejection, Applicants note that such a rejection can be addressed, if necessary, in the later-filed application (i.e., U.S. Patent Application No. 10/575,436).

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Applicants believe that the present Application is now in condition for allowance. In particular, even when the elements of Applicants' claims, as discussed above, are given a broad construction and interpreted to cover equivalents, the cited references do not teach, disclose, or suggest the claimed subject matter. Favorable reconsideration of the present Application as amended is respectfully requested.

Further, Applicants respectfully put the Patent Office and all others on notice that all arguments, representations, and/or amendments contained herein are only applicable to the

present Application and should not be considered when evaluating any other patent or patent application including any patents or patent applications which claim priority to this patent application and/or any patents or patent applications to which priority is claimed by this patent application.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required regarding this application under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16-1.17, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. Should no proper payment be enclosed herewith, as by the credit card payment instructions in EFS-Web being incorrect or absent, resulting in a rejected or incorrect credit card transaction, the Commissioner is authorized to charge the unpaid amount to Deposit Account No. 19-0741.

If any extensions of time are needed for timely acceptance of papers submitted herewith, Applicants hereby petition for such extension under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136 and authorize payment of any such extensions fees to Deposit Account No. 19-0741.

Respectfully submitted,

Date 2/9/2010 By /Adam M. Gustafson/

FOLEY & LARDNER LLP
Customer Number: 22428
Telephone: (414) 297-5652
Facsimile: (414) 297-4900

Adam M. Gustafson
Attorney for Applicant
Registration No. 54,601